

**PRICELESS ROLES  
OF A  
MOTHER**

*If mothers were to go on strike  
what would the world be like?*



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*Today's mothers*

*have a special role to co-create and shape paths  
for the future generation of woman/mothers to be aware  
of their multi-skill professions which they can put  
into action with a great deal of passion for a chain  
reaction to bring about change for  
a better world with satisfaction.*

## Chapter 5

### A-Z UNPAID ROLES OF A MOTHER

*...to serve others selflessly*



‘OH, I’M JUST A MOTHER!’

Who the dickens said that?

I overheard this common comment while sipping an extra-hot latte at my local cafe. And with a statement like that, I just had to turn to look at the speaker. She was a beautiful young lady probably in her mid-twenties to early thirties sitting at a nearby table, cuddling a baby and holding a half-eaten croissant in her hand, with a group of other women. They all seemed to be mothers in the nappy valley surrounded by prams with soft cushiony toys on display.

Normally, I don’t eavesdrop on other people’s conversations but sometimes it happens. I mean really, is it my fault that the only unoccupied table happened to be the one next to them? Anyway, sipping my latte, I continued to eavesdrop. Oops! I mean, to listen. From what I could gather, this young woman had just become a mum. I could tell the baby was a boy as it was draped in blue. She seemed to think that she was ‘just a mother.’ I’m sure most full-time mothers are also nodding their head at that statement.

I believe it’s important to remind you:

A mother’s role is **INDISPENSIBLE!**

In the ancient Middle Eastern religion, mothers were referred to as ‘Goddess Mother’, a symbol of the birth of humanity, the fertility of the earth, along with

the universe and everything in it, especially for the continuing renewal of life. She was worshipped under many names and images throughout the world.

According to an ancient Jewish proverb, *'God could not be everywhere, and therefore, He made mothers'*. The words of this venerable proverb have a strong emphasis on the vital and multiple roles mothers play in raising their children and managing the household. In fact, there seems to be no end to them. It's a role that requires organisation, communication, cooperation, diligence and lots more.

Growing up I barely remember my mother having any free time for herself, having any social life or inviting friends over for a cup of tea and a local gossip. This is perfectly understandable; raising six children does not afford you the luxury of time. Though my father was 'the breadwinner' putting food on the table, my mother was the 'homemaker'.

As with most women in the 1950s, my mother's occupation was a full-time do-it-yourself mum. She was on call morning, noon and night, with no disposable nappies, no luxurious or labour-saving automatic appliances, no push-button or drag-of-screen gadgets to shop on-line or order fast-food home delivery meals.

I remember she undertook the responsibilities of a wife, mother, carer, teacher, psychologist-counsellor, financial manager, nurse and house cleaner very seriously. She did the shopping, cooking, baking, cleaning, and hand-washed the laundry and ironing; dealt with our teething and tantrums, tended to our cuts and bruises, listened to our whimpering and whining.

Come to think of it, I simply cannot recall a single moment when my mother was off duty and left us children to fend for ourselves.

I remember my mother was always up before the crack of dawn or the crow of a rooster, certainly not to meditate or go for an early morning walk. She was the last one to switch off the lights before the bats and owls came out to play.

I remember before we set off to school, there was a prepared fully cooked breakfast with homemade bread and cup of Milo, not just a slice of toast and a cup of tea or cereal, along with a nourishing packed lunch for school. Upon our return home from school, the aromatic smell of a hot steaming fresh mouth-watering Caribbean meal cooked from scratch was waiting for us instead of cold or readymade microwave packaged processed foods. I can still taste the

homemade coconut sweet bread spread with guava jam that would mysteriously appear, freshly baked on various occasions.

Good grief! Hold on a second. What am I rambling on and getting myself all nostalgic about? This chapter isn't about how my mother was on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, including weekends and bank holidays without a salary and no punch-out time. It's about unveiling the unrecognisable unpaid valuable multi-skilled professional roles you, yes, YOU have accumulated and mastered just by being a mother. And to recognise the many roles women take on in society are just as priceless and highly valuable as a businessperson.

Most of us mothers go through life thinking that we are just mothers. We simply don't recognise the amount of skill it takes to raise a child, manage the household, and maintain adult relationships and self-care, including caring for our community. For some strange reason, many of us think of ourselves as workers only when we are working *outside* the home earning a salary.

If we seriously observe the daily tasks and responsibilities of mothers, especially those who are the sole-providers of the household, we find they are many and varied, when it comes to the unparalleled obligations and challenges of raising children to be good citizens in today's and tomorrow's world.

Whether you are a full-time mother managing a household, a wage-earning mother balancing work and family or a single mother struggling to keep your head above water – the metaphor of being a mother is one of the most skilful multi-tasking professions in the world and quite a demanding one.

Let me pause right here and ask you this question; do you recall when you first became a mother experiencing powerful feelings of protection, communicating, negotiating, problem-solving, using your initiative, and being well organized and adaptable? I am sure you have. These skills are just likely to be found in the workplace as in the household.

Does this surprise you?

Listen to this; you have no idea of the multi-professional skills you have accumulated. Being a mother is virtually endless. It is a constant evolving of learning and is one of the most valuable professions in the world. You, yes, YOU are an asset both to your family and to the world, but it is not always recognised as such by us and society.

Not many women who are mothers realise that they have hidden treasures

and are influential leaders, similar to Betty Friedan, the author of *The Feminine Mystique*. She had three children, and encouraged women to educate themselves by using their 'mother traits' to describe their skills and leadership. Eleanor Roosevelt, The World's First Lady, was a strong humanitarian and independent liberated woman who had five children and during that period discovered her passion for leadership, and to fulfil her mission to petition for equal rights of women.

Now, here is where the ignorance of *'I'm just a mother'* steps in. Have you ever stopped to think about how many different skills you are using while doing your daily chores? Instinctively juggling children, managing the household budget, cooking and cleaning, changing nappies, wiping noses, bums and countertops...

If that ancient mundane motto still exists, 'behind every successful man there's a woman', it's time to scrap and upgrade it to: 'beside every successful man there's a resourceful skilful woman.' It's unthinkable to find a successful single man. If there is one lurking around in the universe, I am sure he has a resourceful skilful woman behind him.

Barack Obama, the first African-American President, credited his mother for encouraging him and nurturing his ambitions. He spoke these words on the eve of Father's Day Weekend in 2009:

'I grew up without a father in my life. I had a heroic mum and wonderful grandparents who helped raise me and my sister, and it is because of them that I am able to stand here today.'<sup>25</sup>

Also in the words of Theodore Roosevelt, one of America's presidents: 'The mother is a supreme asset of the national life. She is more important by far than the successful businessman or statesman or artist or scientist.'

I especially want to emphasise that you do not have to be a mother and increase the pregnancy rate, or to stop being a mother and plunge into a career and become like 'The Iron Lady', the late Lady Margaret Thatcher, first female Prime Ministress of England, or to run for President of the United States of America like Hilary Clinton.

Good heavens! Absolutely not!

Nothing could be further from the truth. Perhaps I should have intervened in the conversation with the young lady and the group of mothers in the café, who

thought she was 'just a mother' to help her become aware of the valuable multi-professional skills she will attain while raising a child and managing a home. And that while her child is growing up or has flown the nest, she can transform her motherly traits into a profession, a business or hobby. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

Without giving a second thought to it, you are building a home as a Team Leader; arranging Christmas and birthday parties as an Event Organiser; explaining and monitoring homework as a Teacher; listening attentively to your children's squabbles and tantrums as a Mediator; staying within a budget as an Accountant; and finding out what makes your child's mind tick as a Psychologist. I am running out of space. The list continues below, along with introductions of some resourceful women who have cracked, shattered and smashed glass ceilings and are paving roads into preserved professions for men.

Brace yourself. You are in for a shock...





## A

**Accountant/Bookkeeper/Financial Consultant** – You are able to work out a budget, including a plan for savings, and stick with it. Superb with grocery shopping using coupons, and discount vouchers. Exceptionally good at calculating and balancing, analysing and monitoring, quantifying and evaluating the bank statements; paying mortgage and utility bills on time, organising car and home insurances, and even managing to have regular family holidays within the budget. Along with advising the children to put some of their pocket money in the bank after playing ‘help with some of the household chores’ reward games. Then I don’t see why you cannot follow in the steps of the incomparable women like Hilda Harding, the first female bank manager appointed at Barclays in London in 1958, and Clara Furse, the first woman to be appointed chief executive of the London Stock Exchange in 2001.

**Architect/Carpenter/Construction Worker** – Crafty hands-on person, not only kneading dough, baking bread and knitting cardigans. You are also handy with tools such as a hammer, a drill, a saw, tape measure, knives and cutters like the thousands of forgotten women who helped build Waterloo Bridge during the wars. Not stopping there, you also enjoyed spending time with the children stacking toy blocks, drawing, designing and building dollhouses from cardboard or plastic. Although men are still dominating these roles, there are a handful of fearless trailblazing women who have sneaked in: Elizabeth Wilbraham (1632–1705) and Julia Morgan (1872–1957), two of the first female architects behind the scenes of over 1000 artistic buildings throughout the world. They were followed by more amazing female architects such as Elisabeth Scott, the first woman to design a major building in Britain. In 1928 she won an international competition to design the Royal Shakespeare Theatre at Stratford-upon-Avon after it was destroyed by fire. There is also Zaha Hadid (1950–2016), one of the most famous female architects in Britain today who has received several awards for her work. She has designed several great buildings across the globe including the Riverside Museum in Glasgow and the Aquatics Centre for the 2012 London Olympics.

Yes, we have come a long way, but we need more women in these professions to design and construct ladies' rest and fitting-rooms in shopping malls and stores as the male gender hasn't got a clue about how much space a woman needs in these areas during shopping.

## B

**Barrister/Solicitor** – Argumentative and able to listen attentively to your children's temper tantrums, squabbles and quarrels. Competent enough to stand up for their rights, to identify problems, advise and develop agreeable solutions, like Dr Ivy Williams (1877–1966) the first woman to be called to the bar in England and Wales in 1922, followed by Helena Florence Normanton (1882–1957) the first woman to practise as a barrister in England and Wales, and the second woman to be called to the bar. Though it has been an uphill battle they were joined by other barristers and solicitors such as Rose Heilbron (1914–2005) a post-war barrister and one of the first female judges to sit at the Old Bailey;

Maud Crofts and Carrie Morrison, two of the first four women to qualify as solicitors in England and Wales along with many more breaking new ground in Britain.

**Beauty Consultant/Therapist/Make-up Artist** – So you are skilled at makeovers, and have the knack of combining make-up colours and advising your family and friends on the type of make-up that compliments their skin and complexion to cover acnes and blemishes, wrinkles or dark circles. What's stopping you being a Mary Kay representative? Mary Kay Ash (1918–2001) used to sell cleaning supplies to support her three children after her husband divorced her. She started Mary Kay Cosmetics from scratch with \$5,000 investment breaking barriers to supply women with unlimited beauty. If she can do it, so can you!

## C

**Carer/Charity Worker/Child Development Specialist** – You play a major role with your children's stages of growth in socialisation and development. With your natural maternal intuition perhaps you have heard a call from within, like Mother Teresa, one of the great legendary humanitarians in the 20th century who cared for and rescued people, especially children in poverty, lost or in war zones, and Helen Bamber (1925–2014), a campaigner who dedicated her life to human rights and opposing torture. After the wars she worked with child survivors of the Holocaust and was the first chairman of Amnesty International in Britain. In 2005 she created the Helen Bamber Foundation (HBF) a charity based in London to help survivors of human rights violations. Other pioneering women who played central roles to infant and child healthcare and developments were Dr Helen Taussig (1898–1986), a paediatric cardiologist who co-developed the procedure that corrects the congenital heart operation known as the 'baby blue syndrome', and Dr Virginia Apgar (1909–1974) who developed the 'apgar score' to study birth defects in newborn babies.

**Caterer/Chef** – Many delicious recipes accidentally invented in the kitchen are now household names. In 1930 one of the most delicious cookies was created

while Ruth Wakefield was baking a batch of cookies which required melted chocolate which she did not have. She took a chocolate bar, crumbled it into pieces and added it to the batter, expecting it would melt during the baking. Instead the chocolate held its shape, and that's how the chocolate chip cookie was born. If you have created a tasty recipe like Wakefield, or just have a passion for cooking scrumptious meals for your family or friends, why not follow in the footsteps of one of these legendary chefs like Fanny Cradock (1909–1994), an English television cook and restaurant critic who was credited as the creator of the prawn cocktail? She also wrote several cookery books which were sold in record numbers. Other inspirational figures are Marguerite Patten (1915–2015), who, during the Second World War, invented tips and nourishing recipes using rationed food that was available; her tips still resonate in today's kitchens. She broadcasted her ideas on a BBC radio programme called the *'Kitchen Front'*, and has also written several cookery books. Delia Smith, an English chef who started off as a waitress, ended up having her own television series *Delia's How to Cook* and has written several best-selling cookery books.

## D

**Dentist/Dental Nurse/Hygienist** – Through lectures and practical experiences to educate children on the importance of dental care; making sure the children brushed their teeth after each meal to prevent tooth decay and gum disease. Why not extract your fear and make a breakthrough like Lilian Lindsay (1871–1960), the first qualified woman dentist in Britain and later the first female president of the British Dental Association, in one of these dentistry professions?

**Driver** – Although at times the children drive you round the bend, you enjoy rallying around with them to and from school, sports events, youth clubs and doctor appointments. Be it in a car, bus, train or truck, drive into this profession similar to these two remarkable women: Jill Viner, the first female train driver for London Transport in 1974; and, really, this no joke, Zahida Kazmi, the first and so far only female taxi driver in Pakistan in 1992. Kazmi took her fate in her own hands in a male-dominated world. Before this she was a housemaid and she became a cab driver to support her six children after her husband died.

## E

**Emergency Relief Worker/Firefighter/Policewoman/Security Guard** – All hands on deck! Long and sleepless nights, you are able to monitor your children's every move and keep them safe and secure in an emergency. So, why not get on the beat like Margaret Damer Dawson (1875–1920), police officer and founder of the Women's Police Service in London with a group of volunteers which established the foundation for incorporating women into policing. Edith Smith was the first woman to be sworn in as a police constable with official power of arrest in 1915. Mary Joy Langdon, the first female firefighter in the United Kingdom in 1976, and Dany Cotton, the first (and only) woman to get the Queen's Fire Service medal.

**Event Management/Planner/Exhibition Organiser/Facilitator** – You are a pro at organising in and out of school and summer activities for children. You are also superb at planning Christmas, family get-togethers, birthday parties, outings and picnics, and great at instigating group meetings, fund-raising events, charities in the community and 'mums' night outs'. So take the leap like Clara Zetkin (1857–1933), an activist and advocate for women's rights, who organised the first International Women's Day in 1910 and Debbie Jarvis, the first English female chief executive to organise a Rugby World Cup and first female director of sport for an Olympic Games.

## F

**Fashion/Costume Designer/Seamstress/Tailor** – Doing the usual mundane household chores, you ditched the dressing gown and apron and adorned yourself with in-style fashion and wore silhouette heels while vacuuming. Sometimes it takes a woman to know what other women really need, like the disposable nappies that was invented by Marion Donovan in 1950s. Or if you wish to try your hands at tailoring like Kathryn Sargent, the first female master tailor who recently opened a steel shop in Savile Row, London in its 213-year history.